

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Asia > Philippines > Mindanao (Philippines) > Peace process (Mindanao) > **Mindanao (Philippines) - Call for Sobriety and Reason: Statement on (...)**

Mindanao (Philippines) - Call for Sobriety and Reason: Statement on Mamasapano Incident

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In this time of sorrow, the officers and members of the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM) would like to extend our sympathy to the grieving families of the fallen members of the Philippine National Police-Special Action Force (PNP-SAF), Moro Islamic Liberation Front-Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (MILF-BIAF) and civilians in the Mamasapano incident last January 25, 2015.

Since our inception in June 2000, we have been committed to the realization of peace in Mindanao by upholding human rights and dignity and the importance of the Bangsamoro, indigenous peoples and migrants' solidarity. It is on this premise that we appeal to everyone for sobriety and reason and choose the path of peace in demanding justice for those who have fallen.

For the last three years, skirmishes and armed conflicts in Central Mindanao have been considerably reduced if not altogether ceased. We owe this to the ceasefire and functioning mechanisms put in place as a result of the GPH-MILF peace talks. Like many sectors, we are inquiring what happened in Mamasapano because we refuse to make assumptions and point an accusing finger without first hearing what really transpired on that fateful day. Thus, we demand for an independent inquiry to look into the events surrounding the incident and demand accountability from the author/s of the said debacle and impose sanctions thereof. While at this, the GPH and MILF should review and ensure that from their highest to the lowest ranks must fully understand, honor and respect the ceasefire mechanisms to avoid similar incident from happening again.

We respect the grieving comrade-in-arms of both the government forces and MILF/BIAF. It is understandable if they will let warmongers persuade them to exact vengeance in the battlefields. However, war will never be a solution to the current situation. Rather, this will cause more lost lives and irreparable damage especially to the civilian population who will stand to be most affected. Thus, we call upon both sides to hold their ranks and don't let the warmongering calls get the better of them.

At this time, it is the media that have the capacity to dig into sources from both sides and the affected communities. It does not help to sensationalize the news with the intention of stirring emotions of hatred and thirst for revenge from all sides. We call on the media to be the bastion of impartiality, and let the voice of reason and calm resonate in this trying times.

The peace process has come a long way. It is not only the GPH and the MILF that have invested time, effort and resources to bring it to where it is now. Ordinary people and communities have placed their hopes on this peace process especially now that the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) is undergoing deliberations in both houses of Congress. While the BBL is not without its flaws, we don't believe that suspending or aborting the process is the wise thing to do. We should not make the BBL the sacrificial lamb as a consequence to the violence in Mamasapano. We enjoin the legislators to stay the course by continuing the deliberations on the BBL until its final conclusion and

make it genuinely inclusive and relevant to the peoples of Mindanao.

Let the Mamasapano incident be the gripping force for the legislators to perfect the BBL to provide an environment where a culture of war and impunity is dismantled for the children of the future to live free from violence and oppression.

We appeal to some politicians, public figures and the warmongers to refrain from issuing provocative statements instigating war. It is very easy to call for an “All Out War” from the comfort of your offices and homes when it is not your love ones, family and community who will be affected and will suffer the brunt of another cycle of senseless violence, death and destruction.

Let the way to peace be peace itself - not war. The Mamasapano incident is a sad reminder and lesson for all of us especially the primary peace actors in peacemaking that there should be no more collateral damage in any peace processes - the likes of women, children, Indigenous Peoples, farmers among other stakeholders’ rights and welfare.

On our part, we commit to continue our adherence to public peace processes to help prevent the recurrence of armed conflict by facilitating the voiceless from the margins to be heard to attain human security and inclusive peace.

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